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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NOUAKCHOTT 000655

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SUBJECT: OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL MAURITANIAN VIEWS ON GUINEA

Classified By: CDA Dennis Hankins for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

11. (C) Summary: On October 8, African Affairs Director for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Mohamed Habib Ball shared with PolOff Mauritania's official position on the Guinean crisis as well as his personal insights. According to Ball, Mauritarians, who have not yet issued an official statement, will follow the African Union (AU), the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OCI) and the International Organization of the Francophonie's (OIF) lead. Mauritania welcomes Burkinabe President Blaise Campaore's mediation but at the same time calls for the respect of Guinean sovereignty. On a personal level, Ball said he was disgusted by the events and thought Dadis Camara should not be a candidate. He thinks international intervention may be necessary -- preferably under the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) rather than the AU -- given the potential for full blown conflict within the military and violence against civilians. In his view, Dadis Camara is "finished" and the crisis will be solved quickly, most likely through Camara's assassination at the hands of his fellow coup companions. Although he avoided drawing parallels between the Mauritanian and Guinean situation, Ball stated the recent wave of coups and the international community's approach to them has had a destabilizing effect on the continent. Mauritanian opposition, much less circumspect in its remarks, has stated that the Mauritanian coup and the role played by the international community in legitimizing it, have set a negative example for people like Camara to follow. End summary.

12. (C) Ball stressed that Mauritania has not yet issued a statement or taken an official position. However, as an AU, OIC and Francophonie member, it will adopt these organizations' posture. Nevertheless, Ball stated that Mauritania respects other countries' sovereignty and does not wish to meddle in their affairs. Mauritania supports Campaore's mediation and hopes the outcome will be positive. When asked about what Mauritania's position would be if Dadis Camara decided to run for office, a cautious Ball stressed that was not yet the case. PolOff also pressed him about what Mauritania's role would be in the crisis if it were asked to play one and he said Mauritania would likely facilitate dialogue between both parties to the crisis to help bring back peace and stability.

13. (C) After stating the official position, Ball said "off the record" that he was disgusted with the massacres and rapes and that for him Dadis Camara was worse than Idi Amin. In his view, the real bone of contention is whether or not

Camara will run as he has already agreed to the formation of a transitional government of national unity and to an investigation of the massacres. Ball thinks Camara should not run for office and hopes President Campaore will dissuade him. In his view, the crisis will be solved in the next two weeks but the situation right now is potentially explosive. First, Camara is desperate and could unleash unprecedented chaos and violence as he feels he has nothing to lose. Second, the possibility of an internal war within the military should not be ruled out. He stated he had already heard reports of quarrels between Camara and elements of the Army and that a skirmish took place at the barracks on October 7. Ball thinks that Camara is "as good as dead." Camara's murder at the hands of the Commander of the Presidential Guard should not be ruled out. Camara's coup companions could then negotiate with the international community to save themselves and turn over power to the civilians. Many in the military, said Ball, no longer support Camara now that the international community has turned its back on him. According to him, they want to calm the situation as they do not want to be judged for abuses unleashed by Camara's nothing to lose attitude. Ball believes no country would welcome Camara if he decided to leave, except for one which he said, tongue in cheek, he would not name.

14. (C) When asked about international intervention, Ball said he thought it would be necessary but the AU, despite its principled position, did not have the means to intervene. For Ball, the most appropriate and effective intervention would be by the UN and EU. He stated the international

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community needed to act quickly and decisively as empty statements and unenforced resolutions would lead the country into chaos. He believes the Guinea Conakry crisis could also have a spillover effect in Guinea Bissau and Senegal.

15. (C) Comment: Ball carefully avoided drawing comparisons between Mauritania and Guinea. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to guess what he really thinks as he stated that the new wave of coup d'etats in Africa was sending the continent on a downward spiral. The Guinea massacre and crisis has drawn strong condemnation from Mauritanian opposition leaders, who have stated the Mauritanian coup and its outcome have set a bad example for the continent as well as the role played by the international community -- particularly Spain and France -- in legitimizing it. End comment.  
HANKINS